

Organizing a Think Pink Softball Game

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor
Pat Quinn

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

August 2010

Graduate: December 2010

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Abstract

Almost one year ago, I proposed the idea for a Think Pink event for Ball State Softball.

In my mind's eye, I could only envision what I thought would be the perfect event:

It's a beautiful, sunny Sunday, and the Ball State softball team arrives to warm up in our pink jerseys, white pants, and pink socks. As families and students begin to arrive, they stop at our donation table, where they can buy baked goods, participate in the silent auction, or just donate a monetary amount to the cause.

The stands are packed and after the national anthem, breast cancer survivor, Kim Dixon, throws out the first pitch. After a Ball State victory, there is a ceremony at which we present the jerseys and items to the highest bidder.

In order to organize such an event, I needed a plan of attack. This thesis will describe the steps I took to make Think Pink a reality. The actual day may not have turned out how I envisioned it a year in advance, but some things simply can't be planned.

Acknowledgements

- I want to thank my thesis advisor on the project, Pat Quinn. Without your help, the first Think Pink event for Ball State Softball would not have happened. I know you are an extremely busy person, so I want to thank you for all of your time and support. Also, thanks for keeping me within NCAA regulations.
- I want to thank Molly Myers, who was a huge help with the promotions of the event. You did so much work behind the scenes, and I appreciate it so much. You handled everything I could not with such ease. Between the W9 forms and your connections with U.S.A. softball, you were such a big help. You are so much fun to work with and thanks for waiting for me before opening the jerseys and the package from Vera Bradley.
- I want to thank Vanessa Virbitsky for helping out with the online advertising of the event. Thanks for writing the articles for the event and after the event. They were great.
- I want to thank Coach Nicholson for allowing the Think Pink game into our schedule and for purchasing pink socks for the team.
- I want to specifically thank Renee Montalto and U.S. Bank, Tom Durment, and Ted and Sarah Milian for financially investing into the making of the pink jerseys. Without your support, we couldn't have donated what we did to The Little Red Door.
- Finally, I want to thank everyone who participated in the online auction and who came to watch us play in the rain. Thank you for your support!

Introduction

Before the 1990s, breast cancer was never spoken of in public. It was a private fight that women had to fight on their own. It became even a shameful event for some women to be diagnosed with breast cancer. Women were treated to mastectomies without informed consent or other options. There was little to no help for these women socially and financially. Today, breast cancer is no longer in the medical or cultural shadows. Women who have defeated or are fighting breast cancer have hundreds of thousands of women supporting them and many more medical choices with which to beat the cancer. The goal of the Ball State Softball team on April 25, 2010 was to financially aid those women in the midst of their fight against breast cancer.



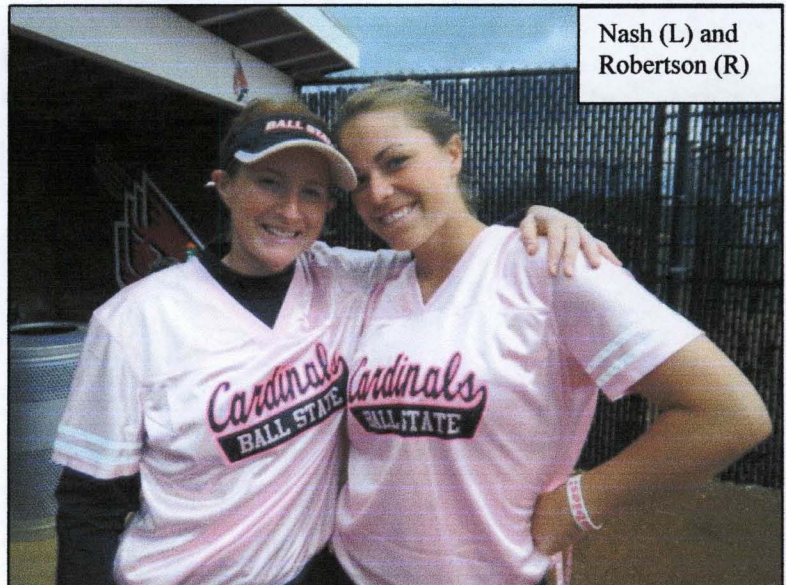
When choosing the topic of my Honors thesis, I faced some obstacles regarding my qualifications for the project. I had been interested in organizing a Think Pink event for the softball team for about a year, but my degree is in mathematics education, which has no relevancy to planning such an event. Although my initial advisor believed me incompetent of this task, I know myself and of what I am capable. I am creative, take initiative, and am responsible and organized. Even though I have no experience in marketing or advertising, my thesis advisor, Pat Quinn, introduced me to Molly Myers, who is the Director of Marketing and

Promotions for Ball State University Athletics. With my capabilities and the help of my advisors, we were able to visualize and properly organize, promote, and execute the event.

Step 1: Personalize the Event

From the beginning, I knew that for this event to be successful, I was going to have to form good, working relationships with the athletic department. I first sat down with my thesis advisor, Pat Quinn (PQ), who is the Associate Athletic Director at Ball State University. I came into the meeting with a few ideas based on my previous exposure to two similar events. The first event was a Think Pink softball game at a larger Division 1 university. Both teams had pink jerseys and pink socks; the press box was painted pink temporarily, and even umpires sported pink. The second event was at another school in the Mid-American Conference, but this event wasn't special. It was simply the home team wearing pink t-shirts for a game. I understood that my event wouldn't be as extravagant as the larger Division 1 University, but I wanted the event to be special, not just a regular game day with pink t-shirts.

Both in agreement, we set out to make realistic expectations for the event. We needed a provider for the pink jerseys. That would be our biggest expense but also our biggest opportunity for fundraising revenue. If we could get a good deal on the jerseys or

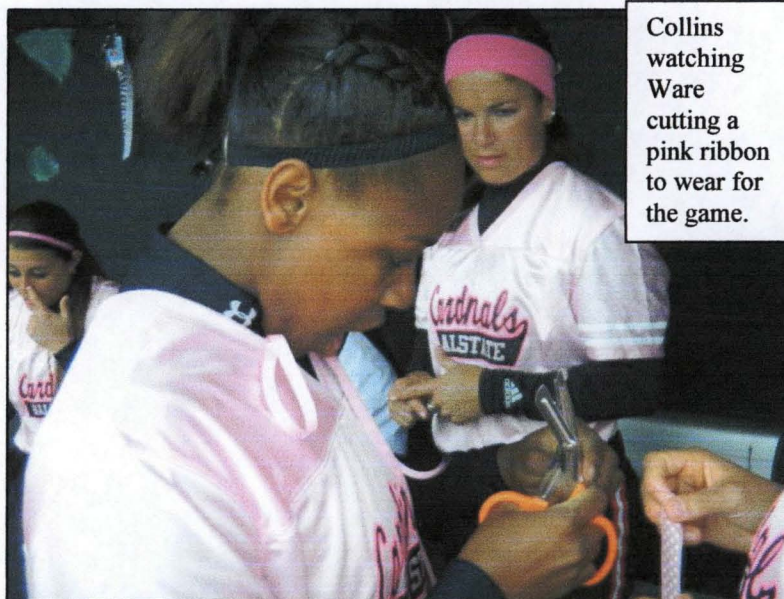


Nash (L) and
Robertson (R)

even a donor for the expense, more money from the event could go directly to the cause. We also needed an organization to which we would donate the proceeds. Also, the Muncie

community was the focus of our event, so we wanted unique ways to draw a crowd for the game. Auctioning the jerseys online prior to the event as opposed to at the event would not only raise funds but also provide advertisement. Finally, we decided to have our Think Pink game on April 25, 2010 – our second to last home weekend so the game wouldn't coincide with Senior Weekend, and a Sunday so that families could come without sporting event interference. After our meeting, I made a to-do list derived from my conversation with PQ and got to work.

I became invested into this event. It was my vision, my project, and my team. I couldn't expect the athletic department to do everything for me. Taking the initiative, I set up a meeting with Molly Myers to discuss the Think Pink event. I shared my ideas for



the softball game with her and any concerns I had about promoting the event. One idea PQ and I discussed was contacting the U.S.A. Softball team for signed equipment or photographs to donate to our event. When I mentioned this to Molly, she was able to quickly reach the National Softball team and get an autographed picture of Jennie Finch to include in the online auction. She also knew with whom to speak about setting up the online auction. It seemed like everything was coming together perfectly and quickly.

Step 2: Local Help

Along the way, I came across a woman, Kim Dixon, who is a local resident of Muncie and a breast cancer survivor. She is also very active in the breast cancer awareness environment.

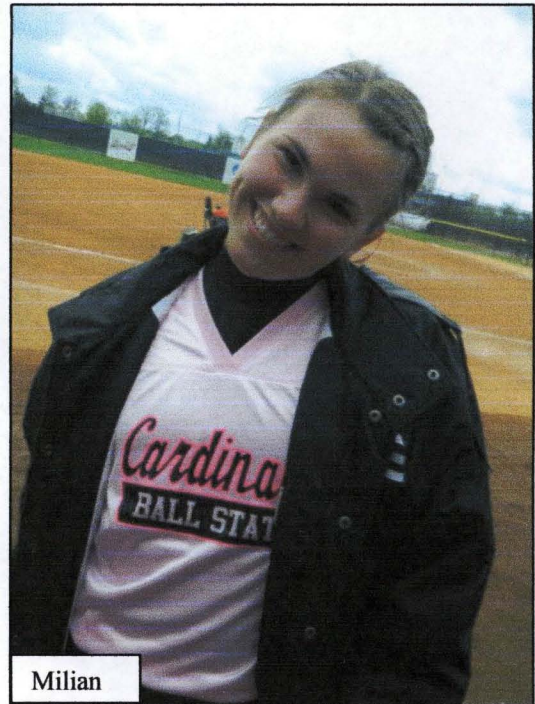
I called her hoping to get some ideas for the event and any tips she would want to offer. Kim mentioned that she travels to Indianapolis every 3 weeks and would be happy to pick up a package of pink ribbons that we could pass out at the game. Handing out informative pieces at the game would also help raise personal awareness for the women attending. During our conversation, I asked if she would like to throw out the first pitch at our game as a breast cancer survivor. She was thrilled to accept my offer. Unfortunately, due to the poor weather and rain delay, she was unable to make it on game day, but was still delighted to be involved in the process.

Step 3: Choosing an Organization

Overall, my vision for this event was to make it a community event; therefore, I wanted the proceeds to go somewhere in the Muncie community. The two main organizations that were brought to my attention were Ball Memorial Hospital and Little Red Door. If we donated our proceeds to Ball Memorial, they would have gone towards medical research, but I didn't know where the proceeds would have gone if we donated them to Little Red Door. I called Little Red Door and set up an appointment with the Director. At the appointment, I found out that they help women in the midst of their breast cancer fight. They help to reduce financial burdens by offering free medical supplies, free breast prosthesis/bras, and free transportation to screenings or chemotherapy. They also have a makeover room where women can borrow wigs and have their makeup done during chemotherapy. For women looking to take preventative measures, Little Red Door offers free screenings, clinical breast exams, mammograms, and ultrasounds. Once I finished my research, I asked my teammates to which organization they would like to donate, and the team unanimously picked Little Red Door. Little Red Door also offered to send representatives to the event and pass out informative pieces at the game.

Step 4: The Jerseys

Going into this project, I knew that getting pink jerseys for me and my teammates to wear was going to be the biggest task, but I didn't realize just how large of a process it would be. Before I left for Christmas break, I sat down with both PQ and Molly to discuss my progress and check our goals to see if they were still attainable. During our discussion, PQ mentioned that finding a corporate sponsor would not be allowed, so, having no other main financial support for the event, he logically



Milian

wanted to take the jerseys off the table and have pink socks and arm bands only for the event. A little disappointed, my mind began to race and slowly I could see this event losing its purpose. Without the jerseys, we would lose our main revenue source for the funding of breast cancer awareness and our main advertisement. Luckily I didn't keep these thoughts to myself. After further discussion, PQ, Molly and I decided the jerseys could still happen if each of my teammates found a donor who would promise a bid on her jersey, which was higher than the original cost.

Thus, I began my search for the vendor to make our jerseys. I contacted a vendor who has worked frequently with Ball State Athletics, but he charged too much, which would take away from the total profit. My dad mentioned to me that my high school softball team went through a vendor who was able to produce their same jersey for almost half the price. Interested, I went with my dad to Hankerd Sportswear, where the owner showed us a pink jersey that he

could make for us for almost half the price of every other vendor I had contacted. I showed my teammates the prototype for the jerseys that we would be wearing during our Think Pink. After they all agreed, I contacted Hankerd Sportswear for an official invoice and moved on to find funding for the jerseys.

Step 5: Lower Cost, Higher Profit

Since I kept my teammates involved with every aspect of this event, most of the parents became informed due to their daughters. One parent offered a generous donation, which covered half the cost of the jerseys. This sparked an idea. I sent out a mass email to all the parents of my team:

Ball State Softball Parents,

This spring on April 25, I am organizing a Think Pink softball game to raise money for breast cancer awareness.

The proceeds will be going to a local organization Little Red Door (specifically for breast cancer patients), which helps out cancer patients with practical costs, from paying bills to buying wigs for those who can't afford them.

The main fundraiser for the event is going to be a silent auction online of the girls' pink jerseys.

The total cost to produce the jerseys is \$560. Ideally, I would like to have the jerseys paid for in donations so that we don't have to use the money raised from the auctions to repay the school.

These jerseys will have the Ball State logo, and each girl's name and number on the back in pink.

I am not specifically asking for you (the parents) to donate the money - you already financially support the program and school. I'm writing to find out if you know of any companies or businesses who would like to donate to this cause.

We've already received a generous \$250 donation from a parent's place of employment that chose to donate, so there is only \$310 left in the cost of the jerseys. If you would like to contact these companies or businesses, that would be great, or you can send me their specific contact information, and I would be happy to give them a call.

Checks can be made out to Ball State University.

Mailed to:

Ball State University

Attn Molly Myers

HP 116

Muncie, IN 47306

If the business needs an invoice to complete the transaction, just let me know.

Thank you so much! Go Cards!

As a result from this email and another generous parent's support, I was able to cover the entire cost of the jerseys before the event, which allowed all the proceeds to go directly to Little Red Door. Also through this email, I found out that one of my teammates has a connection to the Vera Bradley Retail Stores, Incorporated, which donated 3 items to our online auction.

Originally I had planned to have the jerseys and Jennie Finch picture included in our auction with the cost of the jerseys deducted from the total amount raised. Now, after the email, the cost to be deducted was \$0, and there are 3 more items to add to the online auction. I thought that since, at this point, all the fundraising would be online that we should have opportunities to raise money at the field on game day. Molly suggested selling pink leis at the game for \$1 each as well as opening up the option for people to give donations. I also added that we could have my teammates bring baked goods to the event. With Ball State covering the cost of the pink leis, all these ideas would yield 100% profit.

Step 6: Adjusting for Hiccups



When planning a major event, I have learned that it is best to take care of all the big checkpoints well in advance in case something goes amiss. About a month before game day, we received

the shipment of the pink jerseys. I only needed to look at them to know that they were going to

be too small. When I had my teammates choose sizes, I gave them the measurements Hankerd Sportswear gave me. Needless to say, I have learned my lesson: Always ask for the actual shirts to be sent for sizing purposes. Luckily, there was plenty of time before the event, so I didn't have to panic. The extra time allowed for a good solution. Again, another set of generous parents covered the charge to remake the jerseys, so that all income could remain a profit. Since we were left with an entire set of jerseys that we were not wearing on game day, we were able to sell the old jerseys at the game for a lower price.

Step 7: Keeping in Touch with My Advisors

I mentioned before that it would be beneficial to me to form good, working relationships with the athletic department, and I was right. Throughout this process, I stayed in touch with and kept informed PQ and Molly. Molly dealt with much of the business aspect of the project, such as forms and invoices for our vendor, getting the Jennie Finch autographed photo, making fliers



to advertise around campus, organizing the online auction, and mailing out the auction items. She did much of the behind-the-scenes work, which I wouldn't have been able to do,

and, without it, the event wouldn't have survived. PQ made sure to keep everything in line with the NCAA regulations. With Ball State Softball being a Varsity sport at the University, I had to make sure that I didn't break any rules in the process. With his guidance, I avoided acquiring a

few infractions and getting the softball program in trouble. If I hadn't made PQ and Molly an integral part of this process, Think Pink never would have happened.

Think Pink

On April 25, 2010, the Ball State Softball team hosted our first ever Think Pink event. Unfortunately, the weather cannot be planned like the rest of the event, so we were stuck with a 3-hour rain delay and rainy and windy conditions during the game. Even still, we were able to raise a final total of \$1400 for Muncie's Little Red Door, making this event Ball State's most successful Think Pink event to date. Ball State was even able to defeat our opponents, Toledo, to add to the success of the day.

Think Pink in Review

Looking back, I stand behind all of the decisions made to make this project happen. When we chose April 25th as our date, I wish we could have foreseen rain, but we chose it for three logical reasons: 1) It was late enough in the year that warm weather is more likely, 2) It wouldn't coincide with Senior Weekend, and 3) Most children have sporting events on Saturdays, so a Sunday would open up the door for more families to come. If I could go back and do Think Pink all over again, I would, first, have sample sizes sent in for the jerseys before ordering, and, second, I would actively try to draw the community to the game. I would write letters to schools and inform them of the upcoming event, and I would contact local softball coaches or the softball programs in Delaware County to personally invite them to the game. Aside from that, I did what I could to the best of my ability, and I am proud of what we accomplished on April 25, 2010.